Twenty Questions and Answers on our School Work in Porto Rico

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INTRODUCTORY (1-5)

1. What is Porto Rico?

Porto Rico is the easternmost of a group of large islands in the West Indies, called the Greater Antilles. It is about 100 miles long, and thirty-five wide, and is most beautiful, containing as varied and enchanting scenery, and as much of it, as could be packed into such small space.

2. Where is Porto Rico?

Porto Rico lies within the tropics, is about 1,400 miles southeast from New York City, 1,000 miles from Havana and nearly in the same latitude as Mexico City, Manila, Honolulu and Bombay.

3. When did this island come into the possession of the United States of America?

October 18, 1898, the day upon which our flag was run up on the public buildings, is usually regarded as the birthday

of the freedom of Porto Rico, but Spain did not formally relinquish her claim to the island until April 11, 1899.

4. What is the present form of Government?

Porto Rico has now a Governor, appointed by the President of the United States, and a Legislative Assembly consisting of an Executive Council and a House of Delegates. The Executive Council has six American and five Porto Rican members, who are appointed by the President. The House of Delegates is composed of thirty-five members, who are elected by the Porto Rican people.

5. What are some results of ten years of American occupation?

(a) Educationally: Porto Rico has now a splendid system of public schools; whereas, in 1898, there was not on the whole island one school building, now all towns and many country localities have good school houses, well equipped with all modern appliances.

(b) Industrially: Modern machinery and modern methods of agriculture have been introduced, and vast improvement has been made in facilities for transportation. America, as a road-maker alone, is bringing about industrial transformation in Porto Rico.

(c) Physically: The Americans on taking over the island found in it an appalling amount of sickness. The hook-worm disease alone was said to infest 80% of the population. Dr. B. K. Ashford, an army surgeon, in connection with other American doctors, discovered a cure for this terrible disease and already 250,000 cases have been successfully treated.

"The eradication of the hook-worm disease, otherwise known as tropical anæmia, will mean the physical renewal of the people of Porto Rico and the development of a sturdy population."

(d) Morally: Morals are being improved as progress is made along all these lines; for this progress signifies increase in cleanliness, in sanitation, and great advance in better housing and better food for the people.

II. GENERAL (6-12)

6. Why should there be need of mission schools, in view of the fact that so much educational and beneficent work is done by the Government?

(a) Religion is not taught by the Government, and Porto Rico's greatest need is the knowledge and practice of a pure Christianity.

This knowledge can be given them

only through the mission schools and churches established by the various Mission Boards working in Porto Rico.

(b) Another strong reason is that the public schools have not as yet accommodations for all the children of the island. Many thousands still are unable to gain admittance.

(c) Through the efforts and influence of mission schools Christian homes are evolved, and above everything else, Porto Rico needs Christian homes.

7. From what kinds of homes do the pupils come?

There is variety in the homes as in the children; in some of our mission schools the latter range all the way from the little aristocrat, fair of face, or of deep olive hue, belonging to the "primera classe," and living in a large, well-appointed and sometimes luxurious home, to the blackest little tot, who lives in a one-room, palm-thatched shack.

The shack-dwellers (of varying depth of complexion), of course, far outnumber the well-to-do children in our mission schools.

8. What are some habits of living in the shacks?

The people live from generation to generation in the same little town, in the same little street, in the same kind

of a house, doing the same things in the same way. They have no regular meals, the small children wear no clothing; during the night and in sickness every breath of air is shut out from the home.

The rural towns are picturesque, at a distance, but a closer view discloses the miserable homes and the wretched population.

9. How do mission school influences flow out to the homes of the pupils?

(a) Through the friendly visiting of the teachers in times of health, and their kindly help in times of sickness.

(b) The Bible is regularly taught, day by day, as in all our mission schools, but in Porto Rico its stories and teachings have all the charm of novelty, and the children, having excellent memories, tell over at home all they have heard at school.

(c) The lessons of cleanliness also, learned at school, are carried home, and it is often really astonishing that such clean attractive little children can issue from such unlovely homes, as many of the shacks are.

(d) The Sunday School, too, has influence in improving the homes, and is a strong evangelistic agency for the whole neighborhood.

10. When did the work of the Woman's Board of Home Missions in Porto Rico begin?

In the year 1900 the Woman's Board was called on to commence school work in Porto Rico. In that year one school was established at Aguadilla, and beginning was made in medical work at San Juan.

How many schools are now carried on in Porto Rico under the care of the Woman's Board?

There are now six schools under its care, and the "beginning in medical work" at San Juan has grown into a fine hospital, where 12,000 patients were treated in the last year.

12. Where are the schools of the Woman's Board of Home Missions?

At Aguadilla, Mayaguez (2), San Juan, Anasco, Lares (at present closed), and San German. San Juan, the capital of Porto Rico, is situated at the northeastern corner of the island; all the other schools are at the western end, the part of the island for the evangelization of which the Presbyterians are responsible.

III. THE SCHOOLS IN BRIEF

1. AGUADILLA.

(Given in detail, being the first work undertaken)

Four hundred and eighteen years ago a little vessel rounded the southwest-

ern coast of Porto Rico and sailed up the western side of the island to Aguadilla, thus "discovering" Porto Rico, and here at its sparkling fountain the water casks from the Great Admiral's ships were filled with fresh water.

From these same gushing fountains our teachers at Aguadilla drink to-day, and a little to the south of the present town of Aguadilla is a granite monument commemorating the discovery of the island by Christopher Columbus.

Here at Aguadilla was begun the work of the Woman's Board of Home Missions in Porto Rico.

You must imagine a beautiful town extending for a mile or more along the sea coast; remember it lies along a tropical sea, and that in the town, and stretching back from it, is gorgeous tropical vegetation. The streets, too, are full of color and life. Yoked oxen drawing heavy loads, trains of variously-laden donkeys, and countrymen jogging along on ponies with queer native saddles which have great baskets or paniers for carrying wares to market. Through the narrow streets the bread and water-men trundle their carts and the air resounds with the crying of their wares,—"dulcies," cakes and a favorite kind of sweet bread called "Majorca Pan."

But this Aguadilla of the old days is

gradually becoming Americanized. We may regret the passing of the picturesque, but certainly we are glad for the coming in of comfort and cleanliness and health. Especially we rejoice that the children who are pupils of our Mission are now taught honor, honesty, the dignity of labor, and the love of God, of which the Porto Ricans have heretofore been so densely ignorant.

Here is a little glimpse of the school at Aguadilla in the early days, as given by one of the teachers.

"I wish you could look in on my school room some morning and see us all at work. I have the second and third grades this year—thirty-five in all. Of course they are noisy and restless and inattentive many times, but on the whole they are very lovable little people.

"You would like to see chubby Maria, who though only eight years old, is one of the best in the third grade, and little black Carmen, who walks two miles every morning and night to come to school.

"There is Caridada, who makes lace to pay for her tuition—she is only ten—and Manuel, who helps care for two younger brothers, while his mother is serving a long term in jail. They are such interesting little children, and nearly every one has a story.

"One little girl, Bienvenida—which

means Welcome—came back to school to-day after an absence of several weeks. She has been sick, and now her father has gone away to another part of the island, leaving poor little Bienvenida and her mother without any means of support. The little girl came to me last week and said she could not come back to school because they had no money to pay the tuition. You know we try to have all the children pay something each month. Our highest charge is fifty cents, and they pay anything from that to five cents—as they are able. When I told Bienvenida to come anyway, she was so happy. She just sat in school all day to-day and radiated contentment."

The school at Aguadilla now has eight grades, with an enrollment of one hundred and fifty. The Sunday School has an average attendance of seventy-five.

The teachers are trying to train their pupils to be the teachers of their own families and people. There are hundreds of little hamlets where children go absolutely untaught, and in their ignorance they cannot hope to better their condition.

2. Mayaguez.

Mayaguez is one of the most attractive towns in Porto Rico. It is beautifully

situated, having the sea in front and mountains back of it.

The Woman's Board has two schools here—the Colegio Americano and the Marina, or sea-side school. This is truly a mission school, most of the children being of the most needy class. It was formerly known as the Playa school. The Bible has been faithfully and earnestly taught by our teachers.

As has been said, the great need in Porto Rico is for leaders, and the work of training such leaders has been undertaken at Mayaguez. This training school will mean much for the future of Porto Rico.

The Marina School is full to overflowing.

Anasco.

Anasco is a small town and the children are from the very poorest class and in need of all the benefits and blessings our school brings them.

The Bible instruction interests the children deeply—all its stories are new to them and very fascinating. Sewing and embroidery are taught, in addition to the usual course of study.

Lares.

Lares, high up among the mountains, is "beautiful for situation." The hill

slopes are dotted over with the homes of the people.

Religious services are sometimes held in these homes.

The school at Lares has been closed during the past year.

San German.

San German has a well organinzed little day school in charge of a Porto Rican teacher, whose aim is "to have a good school, to teach her pupils as much as she can, and to be faithful always." This teacher is an example of the possibilities of training and inspiring the Porto Ricans to develop their own people.

San Juan.

Far over at the northeastern corner of Porto Rico, in the capital city of San Juan, is the fine "O'Neil Memorial Building," where is housed the San Juan Mission School, which had its beginning in 1902. The building is on a quiet street in one of the best parts of the city. Besides the school rooms, the building contains the church auditorium and teacher's home; there is also a courtyard where plants and flowers are growing and where roses bloom all the year. The development of the different seeds and the growth of plants and

vines are watched with great interest by the pupils in their recreation hours.

The pupils include all classes, rich and poor, and, in the comfortable, well-lighted and well-ventilated school rooms, they are very happy and are doing good work.

The school influences reach out to many well-to-do and influential families, as well as to the families of the poor.

IV. REVIEW (13-20)

(To be answered from memory)

13. How many schools have we in Porto Rico?

14. How many pupils are there in these schools? Ans. Nearly 1,000

15. Where are the schools?

16. Why are mission schools needed?

17. How many Sunday Schools? Ans. Seven.

18. How many Sunday School scholars? Ans. Nearly 700.

19. Why is the number smaller in the Sunday Schools than in the day schools?

20. How many teachers are there in our schools in Porto Rico? Ans. 34.

(Names and localities of these teachers may be found in the Prayer Calendar, or in the May number of the Home Mission Monthly.)

References, for further study of Porto Rico:

"Advance in the Antilles," 50c., cloth; 35c., paper.

"Star 49?" 40c., cloth; 25c., paper.

"Sea Breezes," 5c., paper.

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